

The Divine Forces of the Gospel

A SERMON

BEFORE THE

AMERICAN BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
FOR FOREIGN MISSIONS

AT THE

ANNUAL MEETING IN NEW HAVEN, CT.

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BY

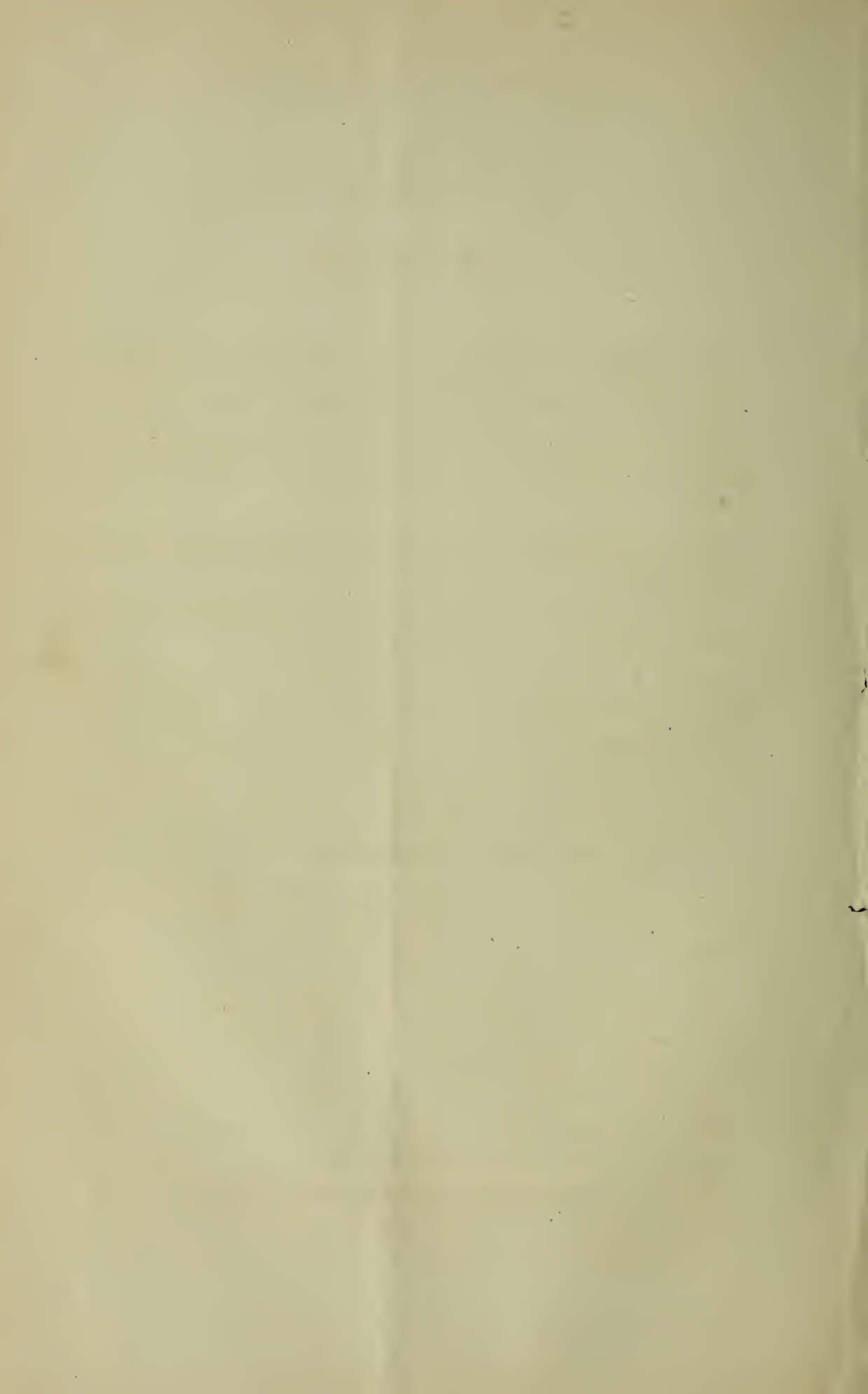
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SERMON.

“And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power. That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.” — 1 COR. ii. 1-5.

THE sentiment is completed and compacted by the same apostle, thus : —

“For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles.” — GAL. ii. 8.

Here is the whole theory of the early success of the gospel. In the acknowledged impotence of human teachings, comes “the testimony of God.” In place of the world’s “wisdom” stands the one absorbing knowledge of “Christ crucified.” Instead of merely “persuasive words” of brilliant rhetoric or profoundest logic, all the utterances, both “speech and preaching,” are freighted with the “demonstration of the spirit.” In the midst of human “weakness, fear, and much trembling” shines forth the power of God, working effectually in Peter among the Jews, and mighty in Paul toward the Gentiles.

All the surface changes of society leave the fundamental relation of Christ’s kingdom to the world unaltered. It is no small privilege to live in a time when Christianity is popular and powerful ; when its great Author is the subject of men’s fair speeches, and his outward realm includes the great empires ; when wealth and fashion throng its costly temples ; when its messengers charter the power-press, and London bankers honor the drafts of its missionary boards. But, for all this, the offense of the cross has not ceased, nor the difficulty of maintaining and spreading a pure gospel diminished. It is in times like

4. *THE DIVINE FORCES OF THE GOSPEL.*

these that faith is sorely tempted to surrender unto sight ; that science pushes far away the living God ; and the power of the Spirit is superseded by the reign of law. At such times, the Church and her ministry "breathe in tainted air." The gospel in solution tends to become a gospel in dilution. Fashion and religion give mutual bonds of good behavior, and the line between the Church and the world fades out in a penumbra. Culture chills fervor ; or fervid men exalt peace and union above truth and purity. Christian youth, nursed in luxury, lose the very conception of Christian heroism. It is a time when Robertson and Brooke, in England, can find the whole power of prayer to consist in its influence on the praying heart, and the difference between the inspiration of Wordsworth's "Excursion" and of Paul's Epistles, to be one of degree and not of kind ; when the popular American pulpit sometimes knows not what to say of the men "who believe neither the Old Testament or the New," but abound in the charities of life ; and when well-meaning Christians magnify the possibilities of heathen salvation into probabilities. It is the era for "Theodicies," and "Sciences of Religion," and "Comparative Theologies" ; an age when men can discover ten Great Religions, — perchance eleven.

Surrounded thus by the glory of secularism, we are called, at times, to take our bearings and look forth for the pole-star of our heavens. Permit me, therefore, fathers and brethren, to strike once more the key-note of the whole Christian enterprise at home and abroad, and to recall to your thoughts and mine this primal truth : —

THE DIVINE FORCES WHICH CENTRE IN THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST ARE THE ONLY ULTIMATE RELIANCE FOR THE WORLD'S CONVERSION.

By divine forces, I mean those which come direct from God ; which, though they act in nature and through man, are behind nature and above humanity, — supernatural and superhuman. When the Church fails chiefly to invoke these influences, her most magnificent appliances are but a mechanism, and her own beautiful form is a corpse. These things need not all be specified in technical detail. The text sketches them in bold outline, the expiatory offering of the Son of God, recorded in sacred Scriptures inspired of God, and applied by the Spirit of God to

the regeneration of sinful hearts and the holy energizing of human lives, through institutions appointed and preserved by God, and by God made effectual to overcome the universal repugnance to truth and duty. That here must be our reliance would seem clear, —

First, from the emergency of the case. After all sentimental dreams, when we open our eyes one appalling fact stands full in view : every member of the race is clearly out of harmony with the God of holiness, and plainly in conflict with his searching law. The Bible did not make it so ; it finds it so. I have heard the godless man of business preach as stern a doctrine of depravity as the apostle Paul. And so radical is the ruin, that when you look upon the new-born child in his cradle, you know that, train him as you will, in the bosom of refinement and love, none the less certainly will he go astray. Gravitation is no surer. You look upon the stranger, of whose existence you never knew before, and you assume that his character is traversed with sin. The man of the world would otherwise scorn your simplicity. So thorough-going is the aversion of men to God, that when the full remedy is offered them, their opposition to being saved from sin long seems, and often proves, unconquerable. Nay, it seems proved by fact, that the forces of the gospel are needed to awaken the desire to be saved by the gospel. And though we grant that the presence of the Redemptive Work in this world creates a possibility that men may be saved in pagan lands ; and though we conceive that for Christ's sake God may accept even a potential or germ faith, — the readiness to believe, — yet in the whole history of heathenism, who will recount to us a score of undoubted cases where that potential faith was found without the coming of the gospel ?

When, therefore, we look forth on this great moral Sahara, where the highest moral attainment is the despairing confession, "I see the better and approve, I pursue the worse," how can we fail to see, that where the whole course of nature has but led to sin, the rescue from sin must be out of the course of nature ; and where the whole race are fallen together into the pit, the only arm to save is the arm of God. Deliverance, if it come at all, springs not from earth, but from heaven.

But we are persuaded of the same truth, secondly, by the manifest inadequacy of human agencies to accomplish the end.

It would seem needless to speak of the ordinary influences of civilization and culture, for the reason that at their highest scope they never aim at the reconciliation of man to God. But since so many are still ready to propose the plough, the anvil, the loom, and the press, as at least needful pioneers of Christianity, we may well take notice, in passing, that but for some higher influence than has yet shown itself in such schemers, no man can be found to send, much less to carry, the plough and the press to the brutalized. Loudly and vainly has the missionary called on them for these magic implements. Nor have I ever read of an instance, outside of Christianity, where mere culture has sent forth its choicest men and women to raise the degraded races. And when the contact has been made providentially, it has been more commonly the fact that the solitary white man has sunk toward the level of the savage, and that in the fuller contact of races the savage has caught chiefly the vices of his superior, — his drunkenness, profanity, and gambling.

Civilization and culture have, no doubt, some diffusive force, but, alas, in conflict with human depravity they have no self-perpetuating power. After all our declamations upon the progress of the race, it remains, perhaps, to be proved, that there is any line of sure, *permanent* progress for the race, except along the line of revealed religion. In the long run, human depravity outstrips human intellect and worries it down. Nearly all that survived the wreck of classic culture, was wafted down in the ark of the gospel. Scattered through the world are indications which fairly raise the question, whether the race as a whole has not fallen away from a primitive moral light, just in proportion as it has receded in time and space from its original source. There are traditions of that golden age, and old mythologies with gleams of lost expression on their now hideous features, universal memories of the great deluge, tattered theologies, discarded moralities, dead languages, and extinct civilizations. The splendid Sanscrit speech, all buried beneath the debris of modern Hindooism, is a more startling phenomenon than those vast western mounds and ancient copper mines that lay beneath the trail of the unconscious moccasin. But be these things as they

may, what corruptions of society may underlie the glory of culture, he who cannot read in Martial, Juvenal, or Catullus, may see in Pompeii. And of at least the average tendencies of unsanctified commerce, the world has had some evidence in the East India Company's relation to Hindoo idolatry, in the African slave trade, in American debauchery of the Indian tribes, in the opium war with China, and in the white man's hellish pollution, that fought fifty years with the missionary for the Pacific Islands.

But when we speak of conversion, or even reformation from vice, we sound a deeper chasm. What human power can rescue the individual once thoroughly sold under sin? To the slave of the cup—some Burns, or Poe, or Hartley Coleridge—how often have wife, children, and friends, wealth and fair fame, yea, life itself, come pleading in vain. How every consideration of prudence and national well-being goes down before some great organic sin, till half a nation hugs the chains of slavery with its heart-strings, and finds deliverance only in the frenzy of suicidal war!

And when we deal no longer with individual sins, but with the bitter root and essence of all sin, how desperate the struggle. The very gospel then seems destined to be the victim and not the victor. No more forlorn prospect is conceivable, humanly viewed, than that of Christ's kingdom in the presence of the kingdoms of the world. A babe lying in a village stall at Bethlehem, while a king and his councillors are deciding its fate at the capital, is its standing type. It is the still small voice amid the universal uproar; straggling workers against vast combinations; and the promise of the earth's inheritance, not to the world's hero, "*impiger, iracundus, inexorabilis, acer*," but to the meek and lowly. It is a universal assault on human nature in its stronghold, with an old book and an invisible spirit.

Viewed on the human side, the vital problem of the Church is simply hopeless. Sydney Smith so far was right, when he pronounced the difficulties in India "insuperable." Martyn said substantially the same, when he likened the conversion of the Hindoo to the "resurrection of a dead body." The case cannot be over-stated, and it is everywhere substantially alike. How often does the young convert, all aglow with Christ's love, feel

persuaded that he can so tell the wonderful story to his comrades that they too must believe. And how sadly does he learn his impotence. I remember well the lamentation of a distinguished teacher, a man of rare intellect, and a most accomplished speaker, that in more than twenty years of preaching in various pulpits, he knew not that he had persuaded one soul to Christ. All his eloquence had halted at the ear. In truth, no class of men so profoundly comprehend the unspeakable barriers that lie in the pathway of Christ's chariot, as the ministers of the gospel. They know full well the apathy of the masses, the pitying incredulity of the great, the mighty ambitions of mature life, the enticements that draw the young from the master's service, the errors and defections of Christian leaders, the unworthy membership of the churches, — the gnarled and twisted sticks and shapeless stones with which Christ must build his temple, both abroad and at home. Xavier, indeed, in ten years, rushed from India to Japan, ringing his bell and scattering baptismal water till he had "made Christians" of a million persons. But it was his own comment on his own work, "If you will search India through, you will find that few will reach heaven but those who depart this life under fourteen years of age, with their baptismal innocence still upon them." Never were human force and fortitude strained to a higher tension than by the devoted band of Jesuits, who, a hundred years later, attempted to convert the native tribes in Canada. They lived in the filthy wigwam, or slept on the uncovered ground, or roamed and suffered with the hunters. They travelled on snow-shoes, tugged canoes and burdens round portages, were jeered at by the sorcerers and threatened by the warriors. They went wet and hungry and frost-bitten. They sickened with exposure and toil; but they would not die of disease. The martyr's crown encircled the heads of Daniel, Lallemant, Brébeuf, Garnier, Chabanel, Jogues, Buteau, and Garreau. Their zeal and self-abnegation were as matchless as their failure was complete. That failure, for which their Boston historian, in 1867, can find no deeper cause than "the guns and tomahawks of the Iroquois," lay clearly in the system they represented, and broke on their devoted heads as a direct retribution for the hollow religion they bore. It was Jesuit principle, avowed by Father LeCaron, that

these "infidels needed but a drop of water to make them children of God," changing "little Indians into little angels." It was Jesuit practice to apply that drop deceitfully, and to inform the scowling father that they were only giving a little sweetened water to drink. They pledged themselves to help the Hurons in all their wars; and they impressed "the mysteries of the faith," by the wonderful performances of a striking clock, a prism, a magnet, and a microscope, together with horrible paintings of devils and lost souls, and with grand religious tableaux and parades. They told the Algonquin chief, that God's ways with friends and foes were the same as his own; and while they resisted the eating of prisoners, they made but feeble remonstrances against the killing and torture. But they reaped as they sowed. All their dangers and their martyrdoms, whether from Hurons, Mohawks, or Iroquois, were on the definite charge of being sorcerers, or in league with hostile tribes. And it was a fearful retribution when their own water-made Christians not only shed their blood, but heaped their own doctrines as coals of fire on their heads. It was a renegade Huron convert who murdered the priest Chabanel and threw him into the river; and when Lallemant and the dauntless Brébeuf stood unflinching at the stake, it was apostate Hurons who taught the Iroquois to add new keenness to their fiendish tortures, and to aggravate them with still more fiendish taunts. "We baptize you," said they, as they poured boiling water slowly over their heads, "we baptize you that you may be happy in heaven, for none can be saved without a good baptism." And as they lacerated Brébeuf's athletic form, in modes too awful to relate, they called out to him, "You told us that the more one suffers on earth the happier he is in heaven. We torment you because we love you." "That such beings could have been civilized," exclaims the Boston historian, "is scarcely possible." And from his stand-point he spoke well. We accept the verdict. To Jesuit Christianity it was impossible, and to any form of humanitarian Christianity similar obstacles lie everywhere. When the humanitarian religion of America at length, like a century plant, blossomed out into one solitary missionary to the Hindoos, he was speedily absorbed, not by "Great Brahm," but by the Brahmo Somaj; and his successor could not tell whether it was well with him or no.

It would seem that no subtle argument can be called for, to show how helpless are all merely human agencies to work out that internal purity, disinterestedness and love, and that wide and deep reign of inner and outer righteousness, which the gospel commands, and the world has pronounced Utopian. By no conceivable stratagem can the teacher or the preacher eke out the lack of the life from God, or animate his clay images with some human spark. Had these things some potency, the world can beat him at his own weapons. His jocular Christianity is not half so attractive for the crowd as the true comedy. The most artistic performances of the church are inferior to the opera. All the sugar-coated panaceas, the consecrated billiards, the church kitchens and religious merry-makings — if these be chief things — are as nothing beside the infinite allurements of the world. In the “study of human nature,” on its weak side or its strong, the Protestant Jesuit will never approach the followers of Loyola; while, alas, when all has been learned that can be learned of human nature, it is still the desperate problem, not how to humor, but to reverse its whole moral drift. The Boston historian in 1867, may be supposed to represent the average judgment of the world when he wrote, “As for the religion which the Jesuit taught them (the Indians), however Protestants may carp at it, it was the only form of Christianity likely to take root in their crude and barbarous natures.” If we look for some skillful apparatus of propagandism, no human machinery will ever surpass the vast and varied resources of Rome. To that we may surrender in advance. If we are directed to the constant and vehement reiteration of the great laws of lofty morality in all the relations of life, we grieve to see that the one grand lack is not of the knowledge but the will, of the power that shall lift character and life into that higher plane. Common preachers can do little with the Christless morality with which Thomas Chalmers, at Kilmany, could do nothing. We admit that the ethics of the Scriptures can largely be culled out from the maxims of the heathen; that Confucius taught the negative side of the golden rule; that Plato held that a good man will injure neither friend nor enemy; and that Seneca uttered maxims which remind us of Paul. But the perpetual, fatal want, was of some influence which should energize those dead pre-

cepts into life, in so much as a single soul ; so that, while Seneca was echoing the maxims of Paul, he was pandering to the foulest crimes of Nero. Universally, when fallen man has been made most clearly to see and feel his obligations to God, like that old man at Tientsin, the highest point to which he has risen has been the desperate call, "O wretched man, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" And the one wail that has risen everywhere from the messenger of the Cross, just so soon as he has learned the bottomless depth of the work before him, has been the almost despairing cry, "Who is sufficient for these things?" And he answers at length his own question, "Our sufficiency is of God."

And we are brought directly to contemplate the fact that, —

Thirdly, the Divine influences that centre in the gospel of Christ prove adequate to meet every emergency in the effort to bring men into harmony with God. Here again my theme, thank God, calls for no subtleties or novelties, but for a fresh recurrence to the ever-open secret of the kingdom, — truths that shine by their own historic light.

On this direct effluence of God's Spirit does the working church securely rest for her own life and vigor. By all the laws of probability, in the tremendous and one-sided conflict of forces for eighteen hundred years, the church should have died a hundred deaths. A weary catalogue of kings and wits and scholars have made ready the apparatus of her execution. Fourteen centuries ago the very year was set for her decease ; and from that time to this has her requiem perpetually been sung. But not there has been the chief peril. All outward combinations have been as nothing to the dangers within. The weakness and wrong-headedness of her own membership, with their freaks and prejudices and bickerings and animosities and scandals, their icy intellect, their headlong passions, their unconsecrated, intractable wealth, their uncontrollable greatness, their reckless vanities and prides, their narrowness and sensuousness of thought and aim and life ; the multiform follies of her leaders, with their gross defections, their imprudencies, their heresies, their rivalries, their low ambitions, their puerilities and platitudes, and emasculations of their glorious message ; the popularities and compromises that muffle the edge of the gospel ; the rationalism

that would dry up the life-blood of her faith ; the selfishness, often national or continental, that would bind the hands of her beneficence ; the material civilization and earth-born hopes that ensnare her young men ; these are evermore, and now more than ever, if possible, the great perils of the church. Constant and mighty as are the dangers, mightier is the power that averts them. The modern church, like the ancient, is the bush that burns and is not consumed. Rather she is that sinking ship on lake Gennesaret, which yet, against wind and wave, without oar or sail, was borne to the land whither they went, when he that walked and stilled the waters stepped on deck.

Often there have been times when, to the eye of man, all seemed lost, but to God's eye all was safe. Some Elijah, roaming in the wilderness, mournfully exclaims, "I, even I only, am left," to whom God can say, "Yet have I left seven thousand." Or the eye looks back over the dreary course of those Dark Ages, when the whole church seemed sunk in formalism and falsehood ; but suddenly it sees a city set on a hill, a pure church all safely nestled on the high Alps, where the snows are crimsoned with the slaughters of three hundred years, and watches her colporteurs winding their way through Europe, with knapsack on back, to castle halls and cottage doors, and listens to the voice, which, with rings and robes, offers also the pearl of great price. Or, an old convent wall is torn away in modern times, and reveals the writing of five hundred years ago, where some sweet soul, from the very bosom of Romanism, was pouring out pure devotion to the Lamb of God. And we watch these flickering lights disperse and approach, till they join in one great guiding star that came and stood over the place where the child Jesus was. We behold the flame of piety dying steadily down in our ancestral land while Butler and Bingham were marshaling the evidences, till God sent Whitefield and Wesley, and filled England and America with spiritual religion ; and while seven hundred and six books and pamphlets against Methodism, it is said, now lie on the shelves of the Astor Library, behold Methodism itself sweep onward through the land. In the Metropolis of New England, wealth, fashion, learning, social culture, and legal lore, send their long tentacles around and through all the old churches of the Puritans, to bear them, and the whole body to which they

belong, away to another faith. But they only purify the church and lift the load from all her activities. A local church in the Old Commonwealth seems wholly seared by the heat of party strife, when, lo, the sweetest refreshing of the Holy Ghost falls upon the impenitent all around; and when the astonished brethren look forth for the unknown cause, they find that a fervent cry had been going up to the God of grace from a little band of praying women, of whom one was she who breathed out of her own heart for the church universal the strain,

“I love to steal awhile away,”

and another was fellow-counsellor with Mary Lyon in founding that seminary, also for the church universal, at South Hadley. A godless father determines that his beautiful daughter shall never be dragged away from the gayeties of life to the gloom of religion; but the Spirit steals in through massive walls, and lace and damask curtains, and she adopts the song,

“Jesus, I my cross have taken,
All to leave and follow thee.”

And so God keeps alive and alert his church. Here are influences which no wisdom can forestall, no combination can crush, no vigilance exclude. It is a Spirit that chains cannot bind, that sword and musket cannot kill. And so long as God yields this help, no outward foe is formidable. In our day, a brilliant and resolute man wrote in his journal, “I will study seven or eight months in the year, and four or five months I will go about and preach and lecture, in city and glen, by the roadside or field-side, or wherever men and women can be found. I will go eastward and westward and southward and northward, and if this New England orthodoxy does not come to the ground, then it shall be because it has more in it than I have ever found.” He kept his word. And what a stir he seemed to be making, as crowds followed him to the Music Hall to hear his bitter denunciations, or to the neutral lecture-room to hear his perpetual sneers. But he passed away, and religion moved right on. Not a church was broken up; God’s spirit came down; orthodoxy still lived. It was like the dropping of a stone into our broad inland lake, — a splash, a foam, a ripple, fading slowly away; and the broad placid lake lies there still.

To one who has traced the track of the church all the way, through her heresies and follies and wrongs, and who looks behind the scenes now, it is a marvel that she has not perished from inner corruption. It is God's standing miracle to have kept the life beating and bounding in so wretched a frame. No less wonderful is the divine energy which makes the message she bears — a message so unpalatable to human nature — yet lay hold upon the worldly heart. As against the infinite seductions of Romanism, and Ritualism, and Sentimentalism, and Rationalism, and open Skepticism, the life and power of Puritanism is a phenomena inexplicable save by the presence of God in it. The King's arrows are sharp. The divine word without and the divine witness within respond unto each other; "Deep calleth unto deep." And thus, while in the far East, Osman Bey, the Turk, discerned the Protestantism which effectually preaches a gospel of honesty to his tenants, and himself rented a house for its preacher; so in the far West, the shrewd but wicked Congressman, when solicited by a wily heretic for aid in building a church, — "a church," said he, "that will receive *you* to its membership," — instantly replied, "Ah, there is the curse of it. I will give no money to a church that will include such men as you and I." But for the sustaining fact that God gave the doctrine and God gives it its weight and edge, its winning light and its melting heat, evangelical religion might retire from the competition in despair. No man knows it better than we who are here assembled to-night.

It is the same energy of the Holy Ghost that gives effectiveness to a ministry so thoroughly human and weak. It is and has always been the cry, that the world's genius and talent are drawn off into other callings. Nevertheless the ministry succeeds. Said a wealthy merchant, "I cannot aid your Theological Seminary because there are so few successful ministers." "Sir," was the reply, "you have watched the course of trade forty years on Long Wharf; how many of the merchants around you in that time have succeeded?" "Not more than fifteen or twenty per cent." "But the ministry knows no such terrific percentage of defeat as that, it has no twenty per cent. *of failure*." Thousands of men, unknown indeed to fame, will reach heaven surrounded by a cloud of living witnesses to their highest success in the noblest work given to man.

When the time comes for some great aggressive movement of the church, how manifestly it is a divine moving which guides and moulds all to the central purpose. So was it in what we may call the great mission of Puritanism to America. At a dozen different points and stages, it was clear defeat. But at all those points — even when Robert Cushman wrote, “all things promiscuously forerun our ruin” — God was organizing defeat into completer victory. So was it in this enterprise of ours. Far off God’s coming shone. Some years before, revival flames had flashed through New England, not like a common dawn, but more like the auroral light when it lies all around the horizon, before it streams up to meet in a central crown. Those were hallowed times in Connecticut when the Spirit was poured out on seventy contiguous parishes around this centre; palmy days in Yale College when Jeremiah Evarts, and fifty-seven other young men in one year, joined its church. Thoughts of foreign missions were stirring in the hearts of Spring at Newburyport, Spaulding at Salem, and Worcester at Fitchburg. Prayer meetings for the world’s conversion, like scattered watch-fires, were held at Hollis and elsewhere; and a Christian mother at Torrington was talking to her son of Eliot and Brainerd. A little later, Samuel Nott, in his solitude at Franklin, was meditating the missionary life during the very time when the young brethren at Williamstown were forming their secret missionary league. The first four petitioners at Bradford to be sent to the heathen, were graduates of four different colleges. Here was no concert of men, but a moving of God. And how signally, in all those opening events, do we read a higher wisdom over-riding the maxims of men. Without funds or popular favor, in the midst of war, embargo, and financial distress, against the great commercial sovereignty of India, except as God’s promises were sure, that enterprise was a chimera. The young men were plainly told by Christian ministers that their project “savoured of infatuation.” The young women were assured by friends that their scheme was “wild.” The Prudential Committee of this Board at first advised the missionaries to go “without their wives.” After they were ordained, your peerless Dwight expressed his “decided disapprobation” of the Committee’s action in sending them forth. But there remain on record precious

memorials from every member of that little band, and from the Secretary who gave them their commission, that they went forth in the strength of a simple faith in the promises of God ; a faith as clear and bold as that of the Father of the Faithful, when he went forth "not knowing whither he went." And the God of infinite resources converted their seeming imprudencies into fertile devices. The young wives in their weakness became a tower of strength. And never were more prolific missionary seeds planted on earth than when the girlish form of Mrs. Newell was laid to rest in the Isle of France, and the worn-out frame of Mrs. Judson on the banks of the Martaban.

In like manner has our whole enterprise fallen back upon the mighty workings of God to clear the way for our missions, from the time when Hall and Nott were unexpectedly informed that the interdict in India was removed, the day when Hopu came back in his boat, shouting, "Oahu's idols are no more," the almost "miraculous" procurement of the Turkish firman for "liberty of conscience," the sudden return of the retreating missionaries to Port Natal, down to the edict for toleration, which may yet appear within a twelvemonth in Japan.

On what other persuasive power, also, has this enterprise steadily relied to provide the men and the means for the foreign field. In the first little band of heroes God sent the first scholars of a class at Brown University and a class at Williams' College. The treasury, almost empty at their ordination, was filled before they sailed. And could the secret history of all their devoted successors be fully unfolded, what an array of superhuman influences should we see, overcoming human reluctances. Mrs. Bridgman is led to China solely in the strength of the 121st Psalm. Mrs. Lloyd sets forth from her city home for the Zulu kraal. Perkins leaves his tutorship, and rides indomitable on a sick bed to his vessel. Grant cheerfully forsakes his large medical practice, Thompson his parish, and Stoddard offers of the professor's chair. And what long chains of such influences seem riveted in every link from above. Perkins, one Sabbath morning, far away in Vermont, fixes his eyes and his heart on a young preacher for his coadjutor, and on that same evening in September invites him to go. The young man, Stoddard, changes the whole plan of his life, and in December is a mis-

sionary elect, and in January a missionary ordained. A young kindred heart, just before a perfect stranger, is suddenly and singularly drawn into a holy affinity of love and purpose, and in February they pass hand in hand to their blessed work. In that month of January, Dr. Perkins sends to a ladies' school a request for a teacher. Of forty notes thus called forth, one reads simply, "If counted worthy, I should be willing to go. Fidelia Fiske." But her health is not firm. Her mother, her pastor, her friends object. She gives it up. But the Lord sends back the call by the failure of the substitute. Every objection is at once withdrawn, and with two days' preparation she also is on her way to a labor whose record is on earth and on high. How divinely wise and blessed was the sudden conjunction. Had Fidelia Fiske studied for years on the one question where to make her mark for God and for woman, she would have seen that earth had no place for her so great and good as those seventeen years at Oroomiah. And Stoddard too — well does his biographer relate the remarkable effect of his decision, in giving "new tone and energy to his daily life." The incoming of the divine afflatus seemed to expand his whole being. I knew him well, for he was my seminary class-mate and friend, but I knew him chiefly as a careful scholar, and a man gentle in spirit and precise in manner. We had no conception of the organizing, toiling power that afterwards shone out in him; the multifarious activity, the ardent faith, the burning zeal, and the seraphic eloquence with which he thrilled the Christian assemblies of America. God was mighty in him, both toward the Nestorian and the American.

And this leads me to add, how we are constrained to rest upon the life from God to develop the diviner qualities in all the workmen and the work; and how thoroughly that dependence is justified. In the midst of incessant and universal infirmities at home and abroad, how God reduces the chafings on both sides to a minimum. Never, methinks, did human machinery work with less friction than our beloved Board. There are dangers, and excitements, and debts, and forebodings, and misunderstandings, and complaints; but God brushes them away, and maintains mutual faith and confidence. Near three hundred missionaries hang trustingly down the chasm, and the brethren at home

faithfully hold the rope. Each year revolves anew the question of faith, "Will the means be forthcoming?" and each year they forthcome.

It sometimes seems as though God gave us this foreign work, more than all things else to keep alive our faith and dependence, and to develop apostolic graces and Christian simplicity. One wonders what we shall do when the millennium comes. We can never too fervently thank God that the mission work began at a time when the missionaries carried a pure and simple gospel, unadulterated. They themselves fed on its angels' food. Their hopes were wholly on the heavenly promises. Robert Morrison baptized his first convert after seven years in China; and our missionary Adams sat down to the Lord's table with one native after ten years in Port Natal. Eight years in Persia wrought but four or five clear conversions; in Hawaii but about fifty. The London missionaries spent ten years in Madagascar without one known conversion. Full fifteen years passed away at Tahiti before the first native voice was heard in prayer. Commodore Wilkes kindly offered the missionaries at Fiji a passage away in his vessels, because their enterprise was so clearly hopeless. Dr. Thomas is said to have labored seventeen years in Bengal before his first baptism. After four years in Burmah Judson saw his first *inquirer* after religion. But with what a majestic faith he wrote home, "I have no doubt that God is preparing the way for the conversion of Burmah to his Son." "Whether I live or die," said the sinking Richards, "the glorious predictions concerning the triumphs of the Cross will assuredly be accomplished." This spirit did not cease with the first missionaries. The wish of Parsons, — "Lord send me to the ends of the earth," "I would do anything to live and die a missionary," was reiterated by Stoddard, — "I shall be happier in Persia than America; there let me live, there let me die." And the early message of Harriet Newell, "Tell them I have never regretted leaving my native land for the cause of Christ," was echoed sixty years later by the dying Penfield, — "We made no mistake in coming to India. India is Christ's; it belongs to Christ; it is all Christ's." Midway between, I see the toil-worn form of the noble Poor, as he traversed the churches a quarter of a century ago, and his cheerful call still sounds in my ears,

“O come with us, and we will do thee good ; for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel.” And in such souls and sentiments, wrought by the spirit of God in the bosom of his Church, —

“ We mark her goodly battlements
And her foundations strong ;
We hear within the solemn voice
Of her unending song.”

To no other source than the same unearthly power are we constrained to refer the steady triumph over the fearful degradation of pagan character. Our God has made that gospel which so egregiously failed in the mouth of the college professor, a word of power even from native tongues. Quala, the Karen, baptized two thousand converts. Blind Bartimeus led many a Hawaiian to Christ. Blind John Concordance first saw how to raise the indolent and covetous Armenians to an almost unparalleled beneficence. The missionaries were divinely taught to loosen their early dependence on books and schools, and to learn that by the foolishness of preaching the Spirit reaches the heart. How marvelous, to the thoughtful mind, are those scenes when the Spirit came down simultaneously on the two schools in Persia, without contact ; or when, in Hawaii, in three separate islands, without communication, the heavenly dew descended, to the amazement of the missionaries ; or when the grace of God swept through a whole prison full of Indian convicts and the encampment of their families without. And how precisely like the workings of the same Spirit in the best revivals in the home churches ! The same deep sense of sin, the same despair of human help, the same bounding to the bosom of Christ, the same peace and joy, the same reconstructed life, and the same serene or joyful death. Behold the epitome in the history of Guergis, the Koord. A rough, vile mountaineer, armed with gun and dagger, brings his daughter to school, and wishes to carry her very clothing back to the mountains. On one occasion he blunders into a revival. He opposes, and mocks, and laughs, hour after hour. Sabbath noon, one parting shot pierces his soul, — “My sister, I need this salvation ; I will go and pray.” Sabbath night finds him weeping on the floor, “My sins, my sins.” Monday morning sees him full of the love of

Christ, and he can only say, "My great sins, and my great Saviour." Monday noon he is on his way to his mountain home,—"I must tell my friends and neighbors of sin and of Christ." For eleven years, thenceforth, the mountains reverberated with his "hymns of lofty cheer," as he threaded their passes to lead men to Christ, till, when the fatal fever was upon him, his voice died away, still calling to the end, "Free grace. O it was free grace, free grace."

Yes, our gospel has been reaching below the lowest depths of the heathen character, and reversing the stream of human nature. It brought the Brahmin to eat with the Mahar. It laid fast hold of "Wicked Jack," the Choctaw, and "Thief Maghak," the Armenian. It made Simon, the Dakota, steadily bear to be called "a woman now." It made the Zulu renounce his polygamy, and the ferocious robber Hottentot, Africaner, became a missionary's nurse and a fellow worshipper with his old enemy Berend, the Griqua chief. The British officer might well be profoundly impressed in Fiji by the sight of a great worshipping assembly, every man of which, fifteen years before, had been a cannibal, and "the fatal oven was still in sight." And these changes have been wrought not in straggling cases, but in hundreds, and in even hundreds of thousands of pagan lives. Sydney Smith's "insuperable" difficulties have been surmounted. Martyn's "dead body" has been raised. Parkman's "scarcely possible" thing had been abundantly wrought on the Indian character before his book was published, though he knew it not. He might have seen Christianized and civilized Dakotas by the hundred, men who periled their own lives, in the great pagan uprising and slaughter, that not a hair of the missionaries' heads should perish.

They that toiled and waited were abundantly rewarded. The fifty converts of the first ten years at Hawaii, in the next ten years became fifteen thousand. Where Judson saw but one Karen inquirer in four years, there are now little less than twenty thousand Baptist church members. In Madagascar, for ten years without a convert, there are thirty-two thousand church-members, and a quarter of a million worshippers. In the Fiji Islands, where the missionaries landed thirty-six years ago, and labored long with slight success, there are twenty-two thou-

sand communicants and five times that number of worshippers. Tahiti is reconstructed. The Wesleyans reckon ten thousand church members in Southeastern Africa. The three hundred and fifty Chinese converts of 1853, had become eight thousand in 1868. And so down the scale, where the figures still are not by thousands, but by hundreds and by tens, the narratives of all the stations, with whatever moans, came laden with continual contrasts of "THEN AND NOW." It is often bitter sowing and blessed reaping. They who disparage the results of missions know not whereof they speak. Herein is that saying true, "The most contemptible thing is contempt."

So superhumanly does this divine agency work its way, that the foul pool of corruption becomes a fountain of life. Men and women whose very atmosphere was pollution, carry spiritual healing. The God who could make one stolen Testament at Agana bring the thief and three comrades to its heavenly light, has shown Himself able to do the more wonderful thing, — to make the Indian, the Hawaiian, the Fiji, the Hindoo, the Shanar, the Zulu, and the Chinese, as well as the Armenian, spread the same life. It was a slow lesson for the missionary to learn, that the gospel in a heathen heart was still a divine seed, and had a self-propagating power. They dared not trust it: but God's providence forced upon them the truth. For twenty years the French rule excluded English missionaries from Tahiti; but the native force aroused itself, furnished the churches with home-born pastors, and filled them up to three thousand communicants. For nearly twenty-five years, in Madagascar, did a more than Neronian persecution expel the missionaries, and with two hundred modes of punishment attempt to strangle the church. But when the missionaries returned, they found near three thousand communicants in place of the two hundred they had left. And now the offshoot missions in Micronesia, Marquesas, Koor-distan, and elsewhere, have brought us fully to know that a true church in a pagan land is a young Banyan tree, and that in due time the main hope of every race, are native hearts filled with the love of God.

In the same process we have learned by actual experiment that the greater includes the less. Christianity is the shortest path to civilization. We have long ceased to send the farmer

and the blacksmith to the Hawaiian and the Indian. They come uncalled. The Dakota wigwam has grown into a frame or brick house, and the hunting ground into well tilled farms. Many an African kraal, where Christ has entered, has changed to a neatly furnished home. Five hundred plows were sold in one year to the natives of Port Natal alone. One missionary has ordered a hundred fanning mills for Turkey. And Hagop Effendi, after a tour of inspection through his native country, boldly averred, that "the most zealous advocate of American civilization could not have done half so much" to Americanize Turkey "as the missionary has done." It is not commerce, but the Word of God, that is giving a literature to scores of languages never before reduced to writing. It is not the trader, but the missionary, who is carrying the English tongue, and Anglo-Saxon civilization, around this globe.

But to my thoughts the strangest thing of all is the petty human force that has done it all. Verily, the cheapest enginery that this world has seen is the missionary. Never did such a handful of money and of men do so much work. When I remember that all the male missionaries of this Board from the beginning have been scarcely half a regiment, and its annual expenditure half the cost of an ironclad man-of-war, that the money laid out for forty-six years in raising Hawaii to its place among the nations was less than in the three years' expedition of Commodore Wilkes in the Pacific, and the whole expenditure of the American Board for six-and-fifty years, less than the cost of a hundred and fifty miles of Massachusetts railway, I know not which most to admire, the feebleness of the instrumentality, or the matchless magnifying and fructifying power of God. I know not whether most to blush for the Christian zeal of the churches, or to extol the glorious workings of their infinite Head. Verily, the weakness of God is stronger than men, and the foolishness of God is wiser than men.

The foremost reflection which comes from my theme to-night is the duty boldly to set forth and earnestly to invoke these divine elements of our religion, both abroad and at home. I say at home. For our pulse now beats round the world. The missionaries have lately assured us that they feel in Calcutta the in-

fidelity of Christendom, and our "eclipse of faith" has made the educated Hindoo slower of belief. We are driven to look at our own foundations, and to see that we are strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. While, therefore, we carefully discern the signs of the times ; while we industriously subsidize learning and culture, wealth and ability, wisdom and energy ; and while we seek out acceptable words ; we will yet remember well that the true weapons of our warfare are not carnal but spiritual. These alone are mighty to pull down strongholds. We put them in the fore front of the battle. In the name of God will we set up our banner. We glory in its unearthly device. In the face of all the physics and the metaphysics, of all the "higher criticism" and the lower, we "believe in God, the Father, Almighty ; and in his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord ; who was born of the Virgin Mary by the Holy Ghost, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, buried, on the third day arose from the dead, ascended to the heavens, sitteth on the right hand of the Father, whence He will come to judge the quick and the dead ; and in the Holy Ghost ; the holy church ; the forgiveness of sins ; the resurrection of the body." ¹ Believing these things, and more also, we will breathe them in and speak them out. The boldness of the foe shall be our teacher. The faith of the scientist shall stimulate our confidence. We admire the serene conviction which, in spite of grave objections, still believes the interior of our planet to be one molten mass. We almost wonder at the wide, firm acceptance of La Place's brilliant theory, chiefly because it will explain the phenomena of the universe ; when it does not explain the presence of comets, nor the inclined axis and elliptic orbits of the planets, and is seemingly contradicted by the retrograde motion of Uranus's satellites, by the fantastic, various, and varying forms of the nebulae, and now at last by the negative results of the solar spectrum. We hold our breath before that precipitous assurance which claims all the infinite species of being to have come by evolution, when it has not yet been proved of one. But we quarrel not with science. All her theories will we accept — when proved. But we will "hold fast that which is good," and

¹ The "Apostles' Creed" of the *fourth* century.

proved good for two thousand years. Not one hair's breadth will we swerve from our great central creed ; for therein, to a great degree, "we speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen." Boldly we range our higher sphere. Science may modify our reckonings of time ; it cannot touch the concerns of eternity. It may elucidate the method of God's workings ; it is dumb before the fact. The telescope can never reach God. The microscope can never find this struggling, heaving soul. No chemical or metaphysical test can solve the terrific fact and mystery of sin. No hospital registry can measure the power of prayer. No agency known to science can renovate one moral character, nor relieve one sin-burdened soul. No roamings among the stars, or crawlings through the earth's crust, can invalidate the change wrought in one believing heart. All the cavils of all the cavers about the historic Christ go down before the presence of the living Christ, as he perpetually enthrones himself in millions of human hearts, with a deathless power and a quenchless love, which the Great Emperor owned he could but feebly imitate by his personal presence on the field of battle. The humblest saint has in himself evidences which neither Strauss nor Baur can disturb. The boldest array of scoffers melt away before the mighty outpouring of the Spirit. Dealing thus with facts and truths that are deeper than reasonings, closer than testimonies, and higher than cavilings, we will "turn us to our stronghold." No Nebular Hypothesis shall constrain us to preach a nebulous gospel. Positivism shall not be more positive than our truth. We reverently accept the very alternative presented to us — Jesus Christ, God, or a madman — and in the strength of that ancient promise of his, "Lo, I am with you always," do we venture forth. We will proclaim a Godhead that is more than a "Fatherhood ;" a Saviour that is more than the most thrilling of tragedians, or the most fascinating of fellow-sufferers ; an atonement that is more than at-onement ; regeneration that is higher and deeper than reformation.

Nor will we for one moment deceive ourselves as to what constitutes Christian success on either field. Perhaps no age has been more sadly tempted to mistake the popularity for the power of religion. The kingdom of God in our day cometh with obser-

vation. Huge church rivalries heat up our blood, vast church machineries captivate our sight, grand church parades impose on our carnal minds. But we will never forget that all this outward, seeming success, may be real defeat of the kingdom of God within, and the open triumph of the world, with its pride of life ; that the immense congregation gathered and held by secular attractions may be thoroughly secular ; that great riches in the church, unconsecrated, are its deep poverty and curse, and the ingatherings of the world's great men, unless they "become as little children," its weakness and snare ; that enormous rentals may stand in bitter mockery of the scanty charities ; that the costly sanctuary may dry up the streams of beneficence ; that fashionable piety may garnish the sepulchre of a crucified religion. Away with these false standards and estimates, these great, flaunting shadows. Give us back the church that is built, not of granite nor marble, but of lively stones, a spiritual house ; and enthroned therein Him who is a stumbling block and foolishness to the Jew and the Greek of all ages, but unto them that are called, the wisdom of God and the power of God. And especially will we rejoice in this, our foreign mission work, that here at last we are brought and held face to face with the naked elements and most glorious workings of our gospel. We are glad to think with the senior Alexander, that each young missionary does as much for his native land as though he had remained at home. And we know that the whole reflex influence of our great enterprise, in recalling these home churches to the primal truths and primal agencies of our religion, is most benign and blessed. Is it not true, that with all our popularities and outward successes, what the church most needs to-day is — I will not say a revival of Puritanism, for God never exactly repeats Himself — but a Puritan revival ; yes, a Persian, or an Hawaiian, or an Armenian revival, with its deep heart-searchings, its profound convictions of sin, righteousness, and judgment, its mighty self-denials and glorious heroisms, its dauntless hopes, and its ringing declarations of the whole counsel of God.

The theme speaks to us, finally, with a new and cheerful summons to Christian and missionary activity. We labor in hope. Our strength is not in ourselves and our fellows, weak and foolish, but in the infinite wisdom and strength. We look out

over a scene of flickering light and shade. We contend with discouragements ever changing, but always renewed. The pathway of light always comes to us through a continent of darkness. But we lean on One who makes no mistakes, and suffers no defeats ; who never wearies and never hurries ; who works on while men wake and while they sleep, while they are born and while they die, while they fume and fret and pass away. We rest on the promise of One who cannot lie. We sow a seed which we know will germinate. We have embarked in the only enterprise that is certain to prevail. Whether we turn our eyes to the amazing obstacles which still retard Christ's kingdom abroad, or to the dangers that threaten it here, — in the glaciers of skepticism that creep in on our eastern coast, or the massive *echelon* of paganism that pushes upon the western coast, we foresee the end. We have no fears nor regrets, nor complaints that our numbers are few or our resources small. Except for their own sake, we have no laments to utter for the great men who have no part with us, or for the brilliant youth who are said to turn their backs on Christ's cause for the attractions of wealth and worldly honor. We need no man who is faint-hearted or half-hearted. For, thank God, Christian manhood and Christian heroism are not dead, nor will they die while God lives. And many, very many, of the best types of apostolic manhood in our day are to be found in the missionary work.

I speak to-night under the shadow of a great University. And I speak to some who are pondering their future course — whether they shall surrender to this Saviour ; whether they shall take part in this ministry ; whether they shall engage in this mission enterprise ; or whether they shall run the race of earth, in commerce, in science, in art, in civil or professional life. Far be it from me to disparage any of the spheres of human activity and duty. When good men fill them, they can be brimful of goodness. There are riches which are alike blessed in the getting and the spending ; sciences so pursued as to ennoble the man and his race ; learning and art which are the handmaids of religion ; professional services which honor Christ ; and a statesmanship that fears God. But these sometimes seem to be but the drop in the bucket. The ignoble wealth, the godless science, the Christless ambition, these are Satan's lures, and they sing

around you with a thousand siren voices. But before you turn finally down thither, we show unto you a more excellent way, — manlier, Godlike; the path of him who “pleased not himself.” We invite you to a goodly fellowship. From the venerable roll of your own alumni illustrious voices of the dead call you to this work. Early secretaries of this Board — your Evarts, bringing the elements of a great lawyer and a statesman to lay them on the altar, saying, “Only let me be employed for Christ and the heathen;” your versatile and beloved Cornelius, declaring it the highest happiness of his life to labor for the cause of missions; your Greene, with his calmness, clearness, and sturdy manhood, asserting to the last his “ever-rising estimate of the excellency and honorableness of the foreign missionary work;” these all speak to you of a higher purpose. Honored missionary pioneers, — your Meigs, from Ceylon; Thurston, from Hawaii; Ball, from China; and Eli Smith, from Syria, call on you to rise and follow. Later voices bring you the message. Your Stoddard shouts to you, “My desire to return to Persia is like a fire in my bones.” Your young missionary patriot Schneider whispers to you, as “on his knees, and with tears,” he gives himself and his fine scholarship to God, exclaiming, “I wish I had more, so as to give it all.” And the voice of the well-beloved Walker still hovers over the churches where, with self-consuming fire, he sought to kindle the missionary flame, and to you he seems to preach again from Diarbekir that sermon of his last Sabbath on earth, “The Master has come and calleth for thee.” O, may the mantle of the noble dead — and the Spirit of the living God — rest, young men, on you.

